

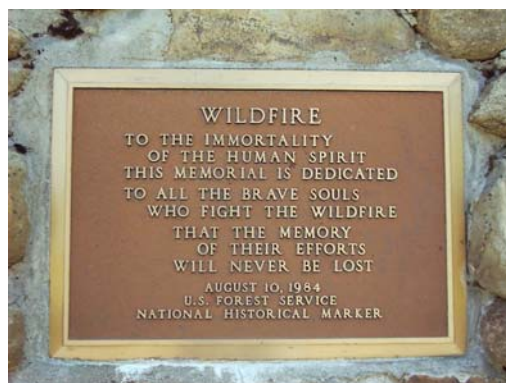
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## Wallace

### Fuels Assessment

#### Areas within the one mile of home sites:

Wallace has a long history with wildland fires. During 1910, a portion of the community fell to wildfire. Property and lives were lost; a monument to Edward Pulaski's crew and six fallen firefighters is memorialized along Placer Creek south of Wallace. Today, Wallace is the County Seat and home to over 1,000 people. However, the forests that previously provided the fuel to threaten the community have grown back to once again give cause for concern to the community's residents.



North of the South Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River valley, south-facing hillsides still bear the scars of the 1910 and subsequent wildfires. Forest vegetation has been slow to reclaim these sites leaving scattered trees, little underbrush, and only dotted evidence of a duff layer. Although this is a remainder of the catastrophe the region experienced long ago, it provides a natural buffer

against a wildfire that might occur today. These areas are not at risk to wildfire spread and should receive little in the way of fuel mitigation efforts.

North and east of Wallace lay the Canyon Creek Drainage and the Nine Mile Drainage. While these areas are both within the boundary of Wallace, the fuels treatment recommendations are detailed in separate sections of this document.

The south side of the Coeur d'Alene River is forested with a diversity of tree species where the forest health is generally good with a few isolated exceptions. These forests are young, with a developing shrub layer that is not a high concern at this time for wildfire spread, except in the south-hill area of Wallace which will be detailed in the following pages.

**Areas within 3 miles of the community center, but outside the one mile home zone:**

The land south of Wallace to the 3 mile buffer perimeter is a checker-board of ownerships including the US Forest Service, the BLM, the state of Idaho, and private owners. Public access is provided on the Placer Creek road (USFS road #456). Various forest health conditions and use patterns have united to create a moderate to high fire danger in this drainage. Concerns in this area include what appears to be evidence of a wind downburst that recently ripped off tree tops in one sub-drainage, and insect and disease problems scattered through the valley. Recreational access has increased in recent decades using this access road which feeds numerous recreational trails for all terrain vehicles.



Forests in this area bare the scars of past fires with the surrounding forests dominated by Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine, western larch, grand fir, and other species. The slopes are predominately south facing from the Placer Creek Road. This area is at moderate to high risk for possible wildfire ignition and spread because of the forest fuels, the southerly aspect, the potential for lightning

strikes, and the potential for ignition from human causes. These factors are coupled with the juxtaposition of this area to the communities along the eastern side of the I-90 corridor which lie in the direction of the likely spread of a fire in this valley.

A running-fire-break extending from the Placer Creek Road at a distance of 150 feet on both sides of the road from the edge of the BLM ownership in Section 3 (T47N R4E), along the road to the summit at Moon Pass (Section 17 T47N R5E) should be created. In this zone, trees should be thinned leaving only scattered fire-resistant (less fire susceptible) mature trees (ponderosa pine & western larch). Logging debris should be piled on the roadside and then burned, shrubs and non-merchantable trees should be cut to the ground and piled for burning. The trees left on site should be pruned to a height of no less than 15 feet. This 8 mile fire break along the road will allow resource managers the ability to hold a fire that starts south of this location and threatens to race up the ridge and then into the I-90 corridor. The resulting 320 foot buffer will allow fire fighters the ability to pre-wet fuels while its presence will serve to reduce human caused ignitions.



A number of areas in this valley have burned in the past creating a mosaic of forest conditions from mature forests to brushy hillsides. The US Forest Service and the BLM should consider if re-burning these brush-fields would provide an opportunity to reforest these areas and reduce the fire risk presented. This valley has been identified as a priority area for Shoshone County because of the

existence of fuels, high amount of recreational access, and threat presented by this valley in the case that a wildfire ignites in this area, spreads to the top of the hill (northeasterly), and then into the I-90 corridor where homes would be threatened. In addition the Placer Creek drainage is a watershed area for the community of Wallace, as detailed in other sections of this document.



## Community Risk Assessment

Wallace had a population of 1,010 reported in the 2000 census. This community has approximately 394 buildings located within 1 mile of the community center. The downtown area is considered at low-risk to wildfire loss, however, the perimeter of the community, especially in the southern edge is at high-risk to loss in the event of a wildfire. Out of the nearly 400 buildings located around this community approximately 164 buildings are considered at high-risk to wildfire loss in the event of a fire in the area. The Shoshone County Fire District №1, with a station located in Wallace, provides fire protection for homes in the city. The Idaho Department of Lands in Cataldo provides wildland fire protection for most of this region.

### South Wallace Hill

The south side of town, east of Placer Creek, climbs up from the flat of the South Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River valley to a steep, forested ridge. Homes have been built on this hillside alongside thick stands of trees and herbaceous shrubs such as ninebark, ocean spray, snowberry and others. Access to this real estate is provided above these homes only at a distance of 2,500 feet in the private ground. Forest fuels are heavy in places and lighter in others with fuel model 10 dominating the prescription. Residents of this hillside are at risk to losses from a major wildfire and from another home in the community catching fire as a house fire would likely ignite the brush and timber surrounding each house in the community.



These many factors combine to create an increased risk to home safety and resident safety in the case of a wildfire. This area has: thick shrub layer, dense tree layer with branches extending to the ground, limited access provided by a few one-way streets,



tightly packed homes, and is closely situated above the downtown area of Wallace and below inaccessible forestlands. This sub-community is at risk from a structure fire starting in the immediate area of the sub-community, or any area in Wallace, as well as any forest fire starting in the vegetation along this slope. In order to reduce the risk of casualty loss in the event of a fire, this

community should consider the implementing the following activities:

- Remove and chip underbrush from the area, and from around the area in a perimeter extending 200 feet up the slope above the community.
- Prune all trees in the area to a height at least 15 feet above the ground or roof tops, whichever is higher.
- Greatly reduce or eliminate parked cars along the main streets as these hinder access by fire fighting equipment.
- Limit or restrict new home construction on this hill until fire access and mitigation needs are met.
- Thin the standing trees above the community to eliminate small diameter trees, leaving about 25 larger trees per acre. Dispose of the slash and debris in this protection zone.
- Maintain this debris free zone into the future, with mitigation evaluation and activities every 5 years.

The area of this treatment is approximately 1,800 east to west and 450 from the north end to the south end, or 18.6 acres. It is the opinion of the evaluation team that this area has homes at the highest risk to potential casualty loss in the event of a house fire or a wildfire, in the entire county.

## Placer Creek area of Wallace

Placer Creek gained notoriety as the locale that Edward Pulaski and his 45 man crew evaded the 1910 wildfire by seeking refuge in a mine shaft until the fire had passed. Although six members of that crew perished, the tale of the leadership that Pulaski exhibited is legendary. Placer creek is important today for a variety of reasons including the location of the Wallace watershed, access to Moon



Pass and other backcountry backdrops, and as a home for many residents of Wallace (near the community).

Where Placer Creek and the community of Wallace intersect, many of the homes are afforded excellent access although some are accessed only through bridges. As with the other places in the county, these bridges should be evaluated for weight loads, posted, and information kept on record at the Shoshone County Fire District №1 office.

Limited timber harvesting activities on the east side of Placer Creek, just beyond homes, have removed forest fuels during a logging operation. Logging slash and debris has been left on-site, and at the time of preparing this document it has been learned that the logging slash left on-site will not be treated. This combination of events places the adjoining homes at a very high risk over the next 5 years because of the deep logging slash. In addition, the juxtaposition of this logging debris to the South Hill homes in Wallace places this entire area at very high risk. The evaluation team strongly recommends that the logging slash created during the helicopter logging prior to this evaluation be treated with a broadcast burn in the fall of 2002 or spring of 2003.

This management will accent a sub-community defensible space that we recommend be built around the homes along Placer Creek in Wallace. This sub-community



defensible space should extend from Pearl Street, south and southwesterly 1,400 feet along Placer Creek road to the end of the home sites. The buffer should be 150 feet beyond each home site and include a fire line along the perimeter of the zone. The total area of this zone is approximately 10.5 acres.

The areas adjacent to Placer Creek in the northwestern reaches of Wallace appear to be only at slight to moderate risk to loss from wildfire but would benefit from homeowners along the perimeter of this area creating a community buffer perimeter along the west side of the community extending 150 feet from the outer row of homes.

